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*Le Roman Idyllique au Moyen Age* par  
MYRHA LOT-BORODINE. Paris: Auguste  
Picard, 1913. 8vo., 271 pp.

In this study of five medieval French poems (*Floire et Blancheflor*, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, *Galeran de Bretagne*, *L'Escoufle* and *Guillaume de Palerne*) the aim is to single out, from the general group of the *romans d'aventure*, those romances whose theme bears a certain resemblance to the Greek post-classic sea narratives. As such, these poems are included here under the rubric of *romans idylliques*, with the purpose of marking the stages of development and decline of this genre in medieval French poetry. The plan of the work is similar in some respects to the one adopted by Langlois in his *Société française au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, which contains a study, although along more general lines, of two of the poems (*Galeran* and *L'Escoufle*) treated in the present volume.

The author gives an analysis of each poem in the form of a prose rendering with illustrative excerpts in Old-French. These outlines are written in a fine literary vein, especially that of *Floire et Blancheflor*, which embraces the parallel of the aristocratic and bourgeois versions in one narrative. As a pendant to each synopsis, there is an investigation into the sources. For the discussion of these, recourse is had to the technical authorities. It may be said with justice both to the writer of this work as well as to the *public lettré* for whom it is intended, that a book of the sort could dispense with the abstruse problems of origins as extraneous to the main theme. The source data offer little if anything in support of the argument, which deals with the evolution of the idyllic romance in medieval France. The third part of the study of each poem is a critical résumé of the points involved. The book concludes with a general summary. The dates of composition of these poems range through a period of nearly five decades, during an epoch signalized by such names as Philippe Auguste and Innocent III. In this time, the Third and Fourth Crusades were the means whereby

France and Flanders came into possession of romantic traditions from the Orient.

Of the five romances in question, there are but two which reveal traces of oriental source. It is only in the case of these two poems (*Floire et Blancheflor* and *Aucassin et Nicolette*) that an exotic setting is given to the plot, and, in this important respect, they conform to the traditional sea-romances. The action of the other three poems, in each instance, occurs upon the land and in native surroundings. The sea has no part in them. They are in reality *romans d'aventure* sharing in common with the romance of oriental tradition only a similar outline of plot. Upon the evidence afforded by these five poems, the book aims to prove the existence of a literary genre, the *roman idyllique*, developed and consciously modified by the medieval French poets. The task is beset with difficulties, largely due to the lack of data. There is no way to account for the advent on French soil, at the very outset of the period indicated in this book, of the one perfect sea-romance in medieval poetry (*Aucassin et Nicolette*), nor can any adequate statement be set down of the causes which led up to the composition of the poem.

The third chapter of the volume deals with *Galeran de Bretagne*. The theme, although analogous to that of the oriental sources, represents a different tradition. There is no trace of any exotic element in the story and an interval of probably a generation exists between it and *Aucassin et Nicolette*. It is likely that a number of poems of this class were indited during the intermediary years but they are not extant. The gap which separates the two poems in question is a wide one, so much so that the author has discovered in *Galeran de Bretagne* the first symptoms of decline in the *roman idyllique* due to the influence of court poetry and the martial spirit of chivalry. If the poet Renaut was conscious that his work lay within the limits of the idyl of romance tradition, he is to blame for adding to his theme certain elements from the matter of Rome and Britain that are not germane to the early character of this genre. It may be he was not aware of writing more or less than a

simple *roman d'aventure* and that his poem does not really belong to the original group.

In the fourth chapter *L'Escoufle* is dealt with and, in Chapter V, *Guillaume de Palerne*. These romances are shown to yield further proof of the tendencies betrayed in *Galeran de Bretagne*. A new modification arises, common to both poems, in that the *mésalliance* motif ascribes a lineage to the hero inferior to that of the heroine. This process of inversion brings with it the closing phase of the medieval *roman idyllique*.

Such, in brief, is the trend of this work. Its argument, like that in the author's first work on the poetry of Crestien de Troyes, errs through its ingenuity. The book has a style of singular charm. If only the entire number of the *romans d'aventure* could be done into modern French with the same literary finish, they would find their place beside the kindred *Mare au Diable* and *Colette Baudouche*. Their value, as Taine says in his critique of *Renaud de Montauban*, consists in setting before our eyes *les sentiments éteints*, not to be discovered in any other medieval documents.<sup>1</sup>

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*Le Théâtre anglais à Paris sous la restauration*,  
par J.-L. BORGERHOFF. Paris, Hachette,  
1913. xi + 245 pp.

Mr. Borgerhoff has given us the first accurate and extended account of the visits of the English players to Paris between 1820 and 1830. In treating these events so important to romantic drama in France his purpose has been threefold: first, to record all the efforts to introduce Shakespeare to the Parisian public during the third decade of the nineteenth century; second, to show the influence of a first-hand knowl-

edge of the English dramatist upon writers, actors, and the public in general; third, to emphasize the fact that the author of *Hamlet* and *Othello* was considered rather as an example of dramatic freedom than as a model.

The failure of the first English performances, those of 1823, was, as M. Albert has already said, "le triomphe des imbéciles et des voyous." Mr. Borgerhoff offers us a very good explanation for the chauvinism of the audience and for the well-known cry, "à bas Shakespeare! c'est un lieutenant de Wellington." The management had unfortunately invited disturbance by printing on the posters the following announcement: "By his Britannic Majesty's most humble servants will be performed the tragedy of *Othello* in 5 acts by the most celebrated Shakespeare." Just at that time "his Britannic Majesty" was too closely associated with Waterloo and Hudson Lowe to allow "the most celebrated Shakespeare" a fair hearing.

As to the performances of 1827-8 and a few of the summer of 1829 Mr. Borgerhoff has collected a great deal of valuable information concerning the troupe and its repertory. A useful list of the plays and the dates upon which they were given enables us to study the tastes of the audiences; for example, the majority of the plays given were not Shakespearean, and of the seven Shakespearean plays, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and the *Merchant of Venice* were given seven times each, *Romeo and Juliet* four, while *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, and *King Lear* were played only three times each. The press of the period devoted considerable space to the English actors and the English drama in general, and Mr. Borgerhoff has selected representative passages from the *Globe*, the *Journal des Débats*, the *Gazette de France*, and other newspapers of the day in order to show the part which the English actors played in the struggle for romantic drama.

The author has laid much stress upon the influence exerted by the English school of acting, implying that Kean, Macready, Kemble, and Miss Smithson gave Paris its first opportunity of seeing histrionic realism. As a matter of fact Talma and Mlle. Mars knew

<sup>1</sup> There are a few defective bibliographical references in the footnotes. In the case of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, it is preferable to cite the contemporary edition, viz., the eighth instead of the fifth; also the third edition of the Michaut version.